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INDIAN EMIGRATION - - - - - PROBLEMS

MEMORANDUM OF MR. H. S. L. POLAK ON THE COLONIAL EMIGRATION CONFERENCE.

SONS OF INDIA, Ltd.
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INDIAN EMIGRATION PROBLEMS

The basis of a consideration of the recommendations in question is to be found in the despatch of the Government of India, dated October 15, 1915, wherein they recommended the total and early abolition of the system of recruitment of indentured labour in India for service in those parts of the Empire to which such emigration was directed. It was clearly laid down by them, a view concurred in by the late Secretary of State, Mr. Chamberlain, that it was no part of the duty of the Government of India to supply labour to the colonies concerned. Still less is it the duty of the Indian people to do so. If, therefore, India permits such a labour-supply to issue from her shores, she will only do so as an act of grace, and because she is convinced either that it is to her own indubitable advantage to do so, or that some paramount Imperial necessity requires it.

The onus obviously lies on those colonies to show, not only that the emigration of Indian labourers is advantageous to the colonial employer, which is self-evident, but that it also makes for the prosperity of the permanent and major portion of the populations of the colonies. Still more must they prove to India that she will receive an extraordinary and direct benefit or that she should willingly make a sacrifice, in which they are prepared to share, for the general welfare of the Empire because of an imperative Imperial need. As to the first question, these considerations appear to

have been generally ignored, the employers claiming, both in practice and by implication, to have a supreme right to be heard; whilst the present recommendations, so far from containing any evidence of a recognition that India must be convinced in the sense above set forth, have avoided the issue altogether, and thus entirely neglect certain primary factors that cannot be lightly brushed aside as having no bearing upon the case.

Where Recommendations failed

Whilst it is perfectly true, as Mr. Chamberlain says, that there seems to be some confusion of thought in India, because of the deep-seated irritation aroused by the unfortunate treatment of Indian settlers in certain of the Self-Governing Dominions, it cannot be forgotten that, to a large extent, that ill-usage has been a direct result either of the direct introduction, into certain colonies (and, notably, the Colony of Natal before it achieved Self-Government), or a lively fear of the future introduction, of Indian indentured labour, or, again, the observation of the nature and working of the system in some neighbouring colony. Remembering this, one cannot be surprised at the persistency with which India insists upon grouping together all parts of the Empire, whether Self-Governing or not, in a consideration of the labour emigration problem, and in light of the present recommendations. It must further be remembered that the indenture system, now that its true character and incidence are thoroughly understood in India, whose conscience has been revolted at the revelations of recent years, has so evil a reputation, from its introduction, in 1834, as a substitute for legal

slavery, to the present day, that she will require overwhelming evidence that any scheme of assisted emigration officially put forward bears none of the taint of indenture, and contains satisfactory guarantees of protection for the emigrants, and the preservation of National self-respect. This, it is respectfully submitted, the present recommendations fail to show.

UNWARRANTED ASSUMPTION

The report not only assumes that the scheme now outlined will be advantageous to the emigrants, but, still further, that economic advantage outweighs all other considerations, an unwarranted assumption that has always been regarded by the opponents of the indenture system as a primary fallacy underlying the arguments of its upholders. Nothing has given greater offences to the moral sense of India than this presumption, for it indicates that the fundamental objections of the people have been gravely misunderstood. It is possible that, within certain limits, the emigrants, under the present scheme, would derive some economic advantage by leaving India; but, as is suggested later, this is by no means certain. No attempt, however, is made in this report to overcome the many political, moral, social, and economic objections to any system of officially-aided labour emigration.

INDIA'S DETERMINATION

The fact that India is no longer content to be regarded in the outer Empire as a "coolie" country, an inexhaustible reservoir of cheap and servile labour for the enrichment of certain interests in those outlying parts of the Empire, has been wholly overlooked. In their report on the situation in Fiji, Messrs. Andrews and Pearson have expressly emphasised this danger, and

Mr. Andrews has since written warningly in the India press on the same subject, from more recent observation in Australia and New Zealand. This danger is bound to militate against closer relations between the people of India and the white inhabitants of the colonies and dominions, not to speak of those persons, absentee directors and shareholders, who are members of the large companies and corporations deriving, in many cases, immense profits from the toil of these Indian labourers. I know, of my own experience in South Africa, how the whole Indian population, including those Indians who are born there, are classed alike as "coolies" by the average white citizen of the Union, a fact that is an unceasing cause of heart-burning amongst the Indian settlers, for they regard the mental attitude implied by this contemptuous designation as tending to create a permanent barrier against their civic and political progress. The report, under the heading "Political Rights," appears to contemplate equally of political and municipal rights for the Indian immigrants, but a community, almost wholly unorganised, and, in the main, composed only of labourers, cannot possibly hold its own in relation to a white community, whose directing elements possess a superior organisation, and represent principally the master class, whose normal interests are bound to differ radically from those of the immigrant Indian population. Moreover, experience seems to indicate that, even where they are willing, the colonial administrations, unless they are strongly moved and supported by some active external agency, such, for example, as the Imperial Government, find it very difficult to emancipate themselves from the influence of local vested interests, representing persons of the same race, status and civilisation as the colonial

officials themselves. Regard being had to these facts equality of citizenship would appear to be largely a formula incapable of being reduced to practice. This fundamental difficulty, it is feared, is, for the present, at any rate, insoluble and the report altogether neglects its existence.

MORAL AND SOCIAL OBJECTIONS

The moral and social objections are equally grave. It is generally recognised that the natural unit, in India, is not the family, but the village community, with its age-long traditions and well-tried organisation. But it is here proposed to recruit by families and individuals. These are to be gathered, apparently, from all over India, wherever they can be secured, and they are thus heterogeneously selected to be removed from the religious and social sanction with which they are familiar, placed in wholly unfamiliar surroundings, which still retain the evil associations of the indenture system, and there, unaided, expected to develop a self-control and maintain a self-respect that European colonies, far more favourably situated, who are amongst their own kind and enjoying all the advantages of a familiar civilisation, have admittedly failed to display when subjected to considerably less temptation. Owing to geographical and other easily understood impediments, these Indian emigrants, as in the past, will lose touch with their spiritual guides, to whom they are accustomed to look for moral support and stimulation, and they are bound, unless they are allowed gradually to degenerate morally, to fall under missionary influences. Without in any way desiring to decry the most valuable work of the various missionary bodies, it ought to be understood that the inevitable submission

of these unprotected and ignorant people to such influence is certain to create deep suspicion, hostility and mortification in India. Being, moreover, deprived of their natural leaders, the Indian population must, in course of time, become largely denationalised, whilst a cleavage between those Indians who are born in the colonies, and know nothing of their parents' motherland, save from hearsay, and those who have come from India, is hardly avoidable. The colonial-born Indian is entirely removed from the direct inspiration of India, is precluded from taking an intelligent part in her development, and is deprived of the immense help of a deep-rooted social tradition, and this is bound to be emphasised by the objectional associations of the indenture system (which, after an existence of nearly a century, cannot be expected, in a brief period of time, to lose all its potency for evil), as well as by the promiscuous intermingling of families, of widely differing social and racial conditions, and having a very slight nexus relating them to each other. These difficulties, sufficiently serious when they have arisen out of the voluntary migration of Indian labourers within India herself, are immeasurably increased, and, as I think, insuperable, when they are the direct outcome of an artificially fostered system of emigration to places far beyond the confines of India.

Economic Objection

The economic objection is no less great. The question has never been seriously examined or adequately answered. To what extent is further labour emigration from India in the interests of the permanent populations of the colonies concerned? It is, of course, undeniable that a useful labour force, constantly renewed and

augmented from outside the colony, will usually be in the interests of the employers. But these are often commercial corporations, impersonal in their direction and management, whose shareholders and directorates are ordinarily non-resident, and represented only by local non-officials, who are expected to produce the most profitable returns for the companies whom they serve. That is to say, their interest in the Indian labourers under their control is entirely subordinated to their desire to cut down the cost of production in order to increase dividends, a purely commercial consideration. In Fiji, for example, the largest employer of Indian labour is the Colonial Sugar Refinery Company, which is not really a Fijian concern at all. It is registered in Australia, whence it is administered. Its enormous dividends, which are not spent in the Crown Colony, are drawn from the labours of its Indian employees, who, together with the rest of the Indian and native Fijian population, derive practically no benefit therefrom, and in whom it is, as a profit-making concern, wholly uninterested. In some respects, too, its interests are in conflict with those of smaller resident employers of labour in Fiji, as well as those of the free Indian cultivator; whilst the principles upon which it is conducted are Completely at variance with the democratic labour policy of the Commonwealth, India has not been so generously treated by Australia that she can be expected to go out of her way to meet the commercial requirements of a group of Australian capitalists who, in the past, have totally disregarded her susceptibilities, and have, by the treatment that they have accorded their labourers, made of Fiji a byword even amongst the other Crown Colonies, and caused her to be stigmatised as an

"awful warning" to the neighbouring dominions. In the same islands, the Vancouver Sugar Refinery Company operates with its headquarters in British Columbia. India naturally asks why she should be called upon to promote the commercial prosperity, not only of Fiji, where her children have suffered so severely, but of a Canadian Province, whose treatment of Indians has been such as to foster serious unrest and revolt in the Panjab, whence most of the emigrants have come. Whilst it is true, on the whole, that the West Indian Colonies have, of late years, shown much improved conditions, as against Fiji or Natal, it is equally true that the principal employers of Indian labour, present and prospective, are non-resident corporations, which have no living interest in the welfare of their Indian employees; and the memory of Commander Coomba, the then "Protector" of Indian Immigrants in Trinidad, whose admission in evidence before the Sanderson Committee created something like consternation in India, upon the publication of its report, has not yet disappeared.

Lot of Indians and Non-Europeans

What, then, of the existing Indian and Non-European populations of these Crown Colonies? Now are their interests considered under this scheme? During the three years prior to the War, the total Indian emigration to the four Colonies averaged annually some 7,500 souls. Since then, and prior to the recent prohibition, but only slightly due to War conditions and the consequent difficulties of transport, at a time when the employers were making largely enhanced profits because of the immensely increased demand for tropical products, the average annual number dwindled to about

half that figure. Indeed, Jamaica managed to do entirely without further supplies of Indian labour. Both British Guiana and Trinidad contain a very large Indian population, apart altogether from the considerable non-Indian population, whilst Jamaica, with a relatively minute Indian population of 20,000, of whom one-seventh are under indenture, possesses an enormons non-Indian coloured population, part of which was actually emigrating to other labour zones (in some cases more unfavourably situated), because of bad economic conditions locally. The Indian population of Trinidad, for the year 1911-12, was 1,12,796. To-day, it is probably about 1,20,000 of whom only one in 15 was under indenture, in 1915-16. Such additional labourers as are required on the estate, to replace wastage and for normal, as apart from speculative, expansion of industry, ought easily to be secured from the large free Indian population and the other coloured-inhabitants of the Colony, if proper conditions of pay and treatment are given. Similarly, in British Guiana, the Indian population, apart from the other elements of the populations, is estimated to-day to number 1.37,000, of whom only one in 19 was under indenture in 1915-16. This Colony, too, should have no difficulty in making up its labour deficit, if any really exist, from its general population. As for Fiji, the islands contain an Indian, as apart from a native Fijian, population of approximately 60,000, about one sixth of whom are serving indentures: and independent persons, capable of judging of the natural requirements of a normally expanding industry, are of opinion that the Colony can manage very well, without introducing any further immigrants from India, but depending upon the natural increase of the present Indian population, an

increased use of labour-saving devices, and such inducements as may be accepted by the native Fijians to take up the work of agricultural development for private employers. Apart from this, Fiji, in particular, has no claim whatever for consideration from India, who, it is highly improbable, will be induced to permit her children to be recruited for service in that Colony. Generally speaking, it may be said that, hitherto, the Colonial employers have found it easier and more convenient to seek for their labour supply in India, rather than make the best use of local labour or use labour-saving devices, such as other large employers, in places where the white man does not, or cannot work with his hands, have been obliged to do, notably the large concerns controlling the Witwaterstand gold fields and the Kimberely Free State, and Transvaal diamond-mines, and even the Natal planters' coal-mines, railways and municipalities, since their Indian labour supply was cut off by enactment of the Indian Legislature.

Worse Condition Feared

In the report, it is recommended that a minimum wage should be established in these four Colonies upon a basis that, for our present purposes, is immaterial save that it may be queried how far that minimum wage is at all commensurate with the profits of the employers. It is now estimated by the employers that it will cost them twice as much under the scheme as under indenture. As they evidently find it profitable to do so, it is plain that, for years, they have been underpaying their Indian labourers. In other words, the latter's wages were in no way comparable with the former's profits. The fact is that, in practice, the minimum wage is

almost certain to remain the average maximum not only for the new immigrants but for a great part of the older labour population as well in Natal, the wage of the free Indian was seldom in excess of that of the re-indentured Indian, when all allowances had been made, and often was even less than his. It is the natural tendency of cheap labour to undersell and underlive the costlier, and for the price of labour, accordingly, to seek the lower, rather than the higher, level, particularly when that labour is unorganised for economic self-protection. The normal tendency, with the stoppage of labour importation, is for wages rapidly to reach a higher level, probably approximating to the fair economic wage of labour. Something like this has happened in Natal, since the stoppage of labour immigration from India, and the repeal of the £3 tax, which artificially depressed still further the wages of the free Indian labouring population. The present Indian and non-Indian labour populations of the four Crown Colonies are entitled to economic protection, and to be permitted to sell their only asset upon the terms most advantageous to themselves, and under normal competitive conditions. The sentiments of considerable portions of the non-Indian populations of these Colonies is set forth at some length in various documents reproduced in Part III of the report of the Inter-Departmental Committee presided over by Lord Sanderson (Cd. 5194), of 1910. Special reference is here made to the representations of the People's Associations of British Guiana, and the signatories to a memorial, contained in Nos. 5 (f) and 5 (1), respectively; the memorial of the Jamaica Baptist Union and its further letter on labour conditions in the Colony, contained in Nos. 13 (e) and 13 (g), respectively; and the memorandum of the Working Men's

Association, Trinidad, contained in No. 23 (b). Nor is there any guarantee that with the fixing of a wage-minimum, "and in the absence of a maximum period or amount of daily labour," the position of the labourer will not be made worse than if no minimum wage were fixed, through an unscrupulous extension by the employer of the hours of work or the daily task. None of these matters seems to have been touched upon in framing the report now under consideration.

No Artificial System Tolerated

The question, too, whether India can afford to tolerate an artificially stimulated system of labour emigration, appears to have been entirely overlooked. I well remember how some of the commercial members of the Imperial Legislative Council, in 1910 and 1912, when the late Mr. Gokhale moved his memorable resolutions for the prohibition of indentured labour recruitment, laid great stress upon the fact that India could not afford to export labour, which was required in an ever-increasing degree for the growing industries of India herself, and this plea was again urged last year, when the Hon. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya moved a further resolution on the same subject. I believe that considerable evidence in the same sense was put before the Industries Commission, that was recently sitting in India, under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Holland. I know, as a fact, that one of the prime motives, apart from humanitarian reasons, that have prompted objections in the Madras Presidency to continued emigration to Ceylon and Malaya, has been the increased difficulty in obtaining labour for agricultural operations in South India. With great industries, such as those represented by the Assam tea-estates, the Mysore and Nilgiri

coffee-plantations, and the Tata Steel and Iron Works at Sakchi, to mention a few of the most important developments of industrial and agricultural activity competing for labour within the country, some of them being precluded from securing it by the artificial stimulus of recruitment, and compelled to rely upon the inducements offered by good pay and improved conditions of life, it is hopeless to expect that India will look favourably upon an attempt, on the part or on behalf of colonies that have admittedly no claim upon her, and one at least of which is regarded as having done her an immense, and, perhaps, an irreparable political and moral injury, to deprive her of a part of the very small floating labour supply that actually exists, and which, in an increasing degree, is being absorbed in the great cotton industry that will prssently have to compete with new rivals Besides all other objections to labour emigration to the colonies, there is no reason to suppose but that, with the increasing demand throughout India for labour, Indians will be, relatively at least as well off economically, by remaining in India and proceeding to those parts of the country where labour is in most demand, as by going abroad. If any system of artificially assisted labour emigration by official agency be contemplated for the primary advantage of India, she will expect it to be one of internal emigration, for the deliberate promotion of industrial enterprise and agricultural development, which, all observers agree, is urgently needed for the welfare of the country in its endeavours to achieve a political status and an economic importance comparable with those enjoyed by the Self-Governing Dominions.

Having regard to the foregoing, it would almost seem to be unnecessary to examine the present recommendations in detail. Nevertheless, it is desirable to refer to some of them. It is stated that the labour required is to be recruited in India, under the authority of an emigration commissioner, appointed by the colonial Governments, with the approval of the local Governments in India. Under him there are to be inspectors of emigration as well as licensed emigration agents, whose licences are to be counter-signed by the District Magistrate and the Protector of Emigrants, both Indian Government officials. In each colony, there is to be, as heretofore, a Protector of Indian Immigrants, who is to remain a colonial official. Finally, every three years, the Government of India will send out either an official or a non-official deputy to examine the conditions prevailing in the colonies.

An Indefensible Principle

The whole principle of recruitment in India is, it is respectfully submitted, wrong and indefensible, and cannot be deprived of the wholly objectionable characteristics of the hitherto prevailing indenture system. It has, in practice, been found that interested parties, armed with officially counter-signed licences, whose salaries and entire means of livelihood depend upon their success in securing the desired number of recruits, will not hesitate to make all kinds of misrepresentations. This has always been recognised as one of the most dangerous weaknesses of the indenture system lending itself to abuses of the worst kind. When one remembers the extent to which that system, and all that it connotes is detested by the people amongst whom it has operated for so many

years, it is extremely unlikely that the new system will attract a class of recruiters appreciably be less open to corruption than did the one that it is now proposed to displace. It is, indeed, held axiomatically by those non-officials, who have had an intimate experience of recruiting, that corruption and abuse are inherent in any system of recruitment, however well devised. If it be objected that, without recruitment, the colonies cannot obtain the supplies of labour that they require and expect, the answer is obvious. They cannot hope to be put upon better terms than employers of labour in India, who have a prior claim, and if they want Indian labour voluntarily to flow to the colonies concerned (and it may here be stated, parenthetically, that no system such as that now proposed can properly be described as "voluntary" emigration, in the ordinary meaning of the term, and against which no objection can be validly raised), which is, in the highest degree, improbable, they must offer such facilities and advantages as will induce it to do so, in competition with the attractions of a local demand. Otherwise, they must do without, and rely upon their own or other sources of supply, regard being had, in the latter case, by the Imperial authorities to the welfare of the existing populations of those colonies.

What Past Experience has Taught?

Apart from this factor, India will have to be satisfied that her emigrants will receive that protection, under the new system, to which they are entitled. But experience shows that this cannot be guaranteed. It is only recently that conditions on the Assam tea-estates have been improved in response to prolonged public agitation on behalf of the voiceless labourers, and the

system there is of such recent creation, that it is all too soon to come to any definite conclusions as to how far they are receiving that protection tnat the new system was designed to provide. Unpleasant stories of the treatment of the so-called free Indian emigrants to Ceylon and Malaya are rife, and are frequently published, with circumstantial details, in the Indian press, and support is lent to the complaints made by the represen tations of independent observers and non-official organisations. The "protection" given in Natal, of which Sir Benjamin Robertson, when he visited South Africa in 1914 had direct evidence, and the horrible conditions only recently revealed in Fiji, are notoriousł and it is far from certain that conditions are such in the three West India Colonies, as to remove from the minds of thoughtful Indians all fear for the welfare of the Indian labourers there. When the Government of of India and the local Governments have been unable to secure—at least, and only, in some degree, until quite recently—protection for Indian labourers and cultivators in Assam and Behar, who are directly under their observation and within their jurisdiction and in Ceylon, which is only just outside the limits of India, it is hardly conceivable that they will be able, with all the supervision that is now proposed, to secure it for Indian labourers further a field. The reports of those who have been officially sent from India to the colonies to investigate, have borne witness to some of the existing evils, but some of the worst have been slurred over by them, or left for exposure by individuals or organisations of a private character. It is strange, too, that the time is, apparently, not yet deemed ripe to appoint protectors of Indian birth, specially selected for their sympathetic understanding

of the peculiar psychology of the Indian cultivator and their familiarity withthe systoms of labour recruitment. Finally, the fact that it has not been possible to induce the colonies to accept as protectors of Indian immigrants officials responsible to the Governmant of India, and entirely independent of the colonial administrations, must bear a somewhat sinister significance in India, where it is known that this was, and has been for years, one of the strongest recommendations of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, who have honestly believed that some-modus vivendi " between India and the Crown Colonies may yet be possible. In these circumstances, and judging from past experience, one may be pardoned for suggesting that it is premature to claim that the difficulties in this direction have been overcome. On the contrary, it is to be feared, if not even expected, that the safe guards now proposed will prove illusory.

Evils of Depot System

Nor will the system of depots now set forth satisfy the new conditions any more than before. For the success with which the recruiters have intimidated their victims in the past, and thrown dust in the eyes of inquirers, is well-known. Of all the persons who, according to these proposals, are likely to have any dealings, officially, or unofficially, with the sending of emigrants, not one will necessarily have any personal or actual knowledge of the real conditions obtaining in any of the four colonies. Anyone who is acquainted with the characteristics of the average Indian emigrant must realise how wholly impossible it is for him to appreciate, at so great a distance from the prospective scene of his labours, the terms of his

employment or imagine the conditions of life prevailing in the colony to which he proposes to emigrate. The delivery to him, therefore, of the written statement referred to in the report, will, though, perhaps, better than nothing, be of no real value to him, at any rate until he has actually reached his distant destination. A British emigrant, proceeding to any of the Self-Governing Dominions to settle, and with only his very limited experience of the conditions with which he is familiar in that part of the United Kingdom from which he comes and such few and vague particulars of colonial life as, with but little imaginative effort, he has been able to procure and digest, almost invariably finds that his new conditions are, for the time being, entirely strange, unexpected and not seldom overwhelming. Yet he ordinarily has behind him official, labour, or friendly organisations to help him through his period of disillusionment and advice him in his difficulties. How much more does the ignorant Indian peasant need such help, guidance and support, only procurable, if at all, from unfriendly aliens, ordinarily incapable of understanding his peculiar difficulties or entering into his special mentality!

A Practical Difficulty

It is also recommended that emigration from pilgrimage centres should be prohibited during times of pilgrimage or festivals. It is more than doubtful if, in practice, this prohibition could possibly be effective. Many ways would be open to the ingenious recruiter for defeating its objects.

The Moral Contagion

One of the worst features of these proposals is that recruitment, otherwise than by families, which, in

itself, is objectionable for reasons already given and was only tolerated for the moment as an emergency measure, and as in the nature of a "pis aller," is seriously contemplated. In the face of the revelations that have already been made as to the conditions of immorality resulting from and prevailing under the indenture system, especially in Fiji, it seems hardly credible that it is now proposed to continue the recruitment of individual men. It is, obviously, always easier to recruit an individual than an entire family. Almost inevitably, recruiters will devote their energies to securing individuals rather than families and they will, as heretofore, be quite unscrupulous as to the methods that they employ to separate individual men from their families. If unattached men, whether married or not, desire to find work outside of their own localities, there is ample scope for them to do so elsewhere in India, or they may, if they choose to do so—and this would be "genuine" voluntary emigration with which this scheme has nothing to do—be left to emigrate at their own cost and risk. In the present circumstances of the Indian populations of the various colonies, now emerging from the indenture system, and with the moral life of large elements either blasted or atrophied by that system, it would be but adding to the existing immorality to subject unattached men to the moral contagion that now obtains.

A False Claim

It is suggested that "the new system will be entirely free, and the indentured system together with the titles and characteristics attaching to it will be abolished". It is to be regretted that this large claim

cannot be sustained by a close and careful analysis of the present proposals. In the first place, it is one of the most familiar characteristics of indenture that the labourer has no voice in the selection of his employer, either before he leaves India, or upon his arrival at his destination in the colony. That characteristic is retained in these recommendations. It has evidently been found that no better way can be devised to bring employer and employee into touch with each other. That being so, it would appear that the proposals stand thereby self-condemned, for, such an arrangement must, in the nature of the case, be purely mechanical, and, whilst, continuing to partake of the character of trafficking in chattel labour, be deprived of all human and social relationship. But an even graver criticism is provoked by the recommendation that, for the first six months after arrival in the colony, the labourer—and, presumably, his family, too—is bound to the selected employer. Except in extraordinary circumstances, of which he is not to be the judge, he cannot lawfully leave the service of that employer. But this is indenture in another guise and called by another name. It surely cannot matter "in principle" (though it would, of course, as to the "extent" of the injury to him), if a man be bound to an employer, not of his selection, for six months or five years. All idea of parity of contract disappears at once. And there is internal evidence of the recognition of this weakness in the recommendations, for it is stated that "at no time will the immigrant be under any indenture, or any contract, 'other than the above,' i.e., that the immigrant is bound to the selected employer for the first six months of his life in the colony, save in so far as the Protector may sanction

or require during that period a change of employment." This, in itself, suffices, in my opinion, to condemn the system now proposed. Of the six principal features of the indenture system described by the late Mr. Gokhale in his historic speech in the Imperial Legislative Council, on March 4, 1912, no less than five are, in all essentials, retained in the present scheme.

IGNORING HUMAN ELEMENTS

I have spent many years in observing in various parts of the world the relations of the white employer and the coloured labourer, especially the coloured immigrant labourer. After a very careful consideration of the conditions and circumstances of such employment, I have unhesitatingly come to the conclusion that in no circumstances whatever should any artificially stimulated system of coloured emigration be countenanced within the Empire. Although I am prepared to admit that this report indicates a very real desire to solve what is, I am convinced, an insoluble problem, and that the present proposals are far in advance of anything that I had expected to result from the deliberations of the Inter-Departmental Conference, I think that, from the commencement, it adopted a wrong view point, and that sight has been completely lost of the human elements inseparable from the problem, and of the failure and weaknesses of ordinary human nature, when faced with the question of the relations of a community of employers belonging to a race, highly organised for its own protection, and regarding itself as superior towards a labour population, variously derived, ill-organised for self-defence, and regarded as inferior, with all imaginable forms of protection of the ignorant

coolie, I am convinced that effectual protection is impossible. There is not, I feel positive from such experience, a single form of protection of the labour that cannot be evaded by an employee minded to do so. It is well-known that, even in so highly developed a country as England, it is necessary to have constant official supervision for the protection of the workers, and especially for the women and children workers as against the employers, and it is equally well-known that constant complaint is made that the protection afforded fails to prevent all kinds of evasions of the law. If these things can happen in populous industrial centres, where the workers and employers are of the same race and bound together by the same national system and social conditions, under the very eyes of the Government inspectors, whose vigilance is unquestioned, and in spite of the watchfulness of the trades' unions and other labour organisations, reinforced by the criticism of the press and the powers of Parliament, then it is clear that the Indian labour emigrant, unorganised, and, by his very circumstances, helpless effectually to organise, is likely to fare a great deal worse at the hands of the paid servants of the great corporations of distant shareholders, exploiting his labour, and profiting, in ignorance of the conditions of his toil, by its product.

Indian Opinion not Consulted

It is stated that the object of the present recommendations will be to encourage the settlement of Indians in certain colonies after a probationary period of employment in those colonies, to train and fit them for life and work there, and at the same time to afford a supply of labour essential to the well-being of the colonists themselves. It is singular and significant that

the colonies selected for this experiment are not those which may have been recommended for Indian colonisation by well-informed Indian public opinion, having regard to what, in the opinion of India, would be the best fields for independent Indian enterprise, all the factors being considered, but those four colonies which have been, until the present year, in the habit of indenting upon India for their labour supply. The primary purpose of this new scheme, therefore, is clearly not to encourage Indian settlement in those colonies for the advantage of the Indian settlers, or to train and fit them for-life and work there, which would be a laudable and benevolent object, but "to afford a supply of the labour essential to the well-being of the (four) colonies themselves". All else is of purely secondary importance. The conclusion is irresistible, therefore, that if the labour requirements of the interested colonial employers had been met otherwise, this Conference would not have sat, or the present recommendations made. Their acceptance is, in my opinion, impossible.

From Indian View-Point

Whilst it is true that we are bound to look at the matter primarily from the point of view of India, who has, in the past, been very deeply affected by the result of various schemes of labour emigration, the present schemes may be condemned equally from the much wider standpoint of the Empire as a whole. At the present stage of the relations of the various parts of the Empire, and in the existing state of chaos in the relations of capital and labour everywhere which urgently call for the reconstruction of the economic system upon a more equitable basis, it will be in the best interests of

the Empire, and of India as an integaral part of it, that no scheme of labour importation from India into any other part of the Imperial Dominions by official agency should be countenanced.

FREE CITIZENSHIP URGED

In the course of a statement made by him on November 27 last, when presiding at a meeting of the Royal Society of Arts, on the subject of "Land Settlement within the Empire," the Rt. Hon. Mr. Walter Long, Secretary of State for the Colonies, is reported to have said :

"They could not, either by compulsion or by bribery, induce able-bodied citizens of the Empire who were wanted here to leave this country, and they ought not to try to do it. They could not control, and he did not think that it was desirable that they should control the wishes and movements of free citizens, and if men or women desired to transfer their energies and their intelligence and their muscles to another part of the Empire, they could not prevent them. If they meant to go, however, everything should be done to see that the conditions under which they left this country and entered the land of their choice were as satisfactory as possible, so that they should have a fair start."

I unhesitatingly accept that statement in its entirety, as applied to Indian conditions, and claim that it supports my arguments, as already set forth, in every essential respect. At the present time, Indians, and especially Indian labourers, are not "free citizens of the Empire," and I am strongly of opinion that, even under an absolutely voluntary system of emigration,

with the free-will of the emigrants, and devoid wholly of any suspicion of recruitment or official agency, even greater precautions are required for successful Indian colonisation if deemed desirable by India than are needed for the protection of British emigrants.

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